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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS KMDR

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday President Bush hinted that he supported the continuation of the IDF operation in Lebanon. The radio quoted Bush as saying: "We want a sustainable cease-fire. We don't want something that's short-term in duration. We want to address the root causes of the violence in the area, and therefore, our mission and our goal is to have a lasting peace -- not a temporary peace, but something that lasts. And I believe that Iraq, in some ways, faces the same difficulty, and that is a new democracy is emerging and there are people who are willing to use terrorist techniques to stop it." The President was speaking at a joint White House press availability with Iraqi PM Nuri Al-Maliki.

All media reported on the second day of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's current visit to Israel and the PA. Ha'aretz (lead story) and Yediot reported that Secretary Rice and PM Ehud Olmert agreed Tuesday that the role of the international force that will be sent to Lebanon following a cease-fire will be to assist the Lebanese Army to deploy in the south, ensure that Hizbulah does not rebuild its positions there and ensure that quiet is maintained along the Israeli-Lebanese border. However, Ha'aretz and Yediot said that this force will not be responsible for disarming Hizbulah nor will it be stationed at the border crossings between Lebanon and Syria in order to halt the flow of weapons from Syria to Hizbulah. Ha'aretz wrote that Israel has thereby in effect conceded its initial demands that any cease-fire deal include stripping Hizbulah of its rockets and ensuring that it is not rearmed. Ha'aretz wrote that Rice and Olmert agreed that any new arrangement in Lebanon must be based on UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and the statement issued by the G-8 summit, both of which call for disarming Hizbulah and deploying the Lebanese Army along the Israel-Lebanon border. Ha'aretz quoted Olmert as saying that Israelis determined to keep up the fight against both Hizbulah in the north and Hamas in the south. Ha'aretz quoted Secretary Rice as saying that the US opposes an immediate cease-fire that is not part of a broader arrangement. The Secretary was quoted as saying that instead, the US is seeking a sustainable cease-fire that would improve the security situation, because "we have no interest in returning in another three weeks, or three months, or six months," or whenever the extremists next decide to sabotage the peace.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel promised Secretary Rice Tuesday that it would work to ease the humanitarian distress in Lebanon. The newspaper reported that Olmert pledged to widen existing transportation channels in Lebanon and add transportation corridors for that purpose. Ha'aretz reported that Defense Minister Amir Peretz proposed to Rice that an international task force be created to assist in rehabilitating Lebanon after the fighting ends. Ha'aretz quoted Peretz as saying that such a force would prevent the creation of a vacuum that would enable Iran to strengthen its hold on Lebanon by financing the reconstruction itself, which it is currently promising to do. Yediot reported that Peretz has advocated the creation of an Israeli security zone in southern Lebanon, without permanent IDF outposts.

Israel Radio and other media reported that four members of a UNIFIL force, including a Chinese worker for the organization, were killed in an IAF air strike on Khiam, southern Lebanon. Israel Radio reported that the Chinese government summoned Israel's Ambassador in Beijing, requesting that Israel apologize over his killing. The

station cited the Israeli Foreign Ministry as saying that Israel will conduct a full investigation into the matter. The station reported that Israeli Representative to the UN Ambassador Danny Gillerman expressed deep regret over the incident but that he rejected a claim by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that he was "shocked and deeply distressed by the apparently deliberate targeting by Israeli Defense Forces of a UN Observer post in southern Lebanon." Israel Radio later reported that Olmert called Annan to express his deep regret for the incident, but that he voiced reservations over Annan's remarks. Israel Radio reported that Annan called on the GOI to conduct a full investigation into the incident. The radio reported that Israel's Ambassador to the US Danny Ayalon also condemned Annan's remarks and called on him to apologize.

Israel Radio and other media quoted Hizbulah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah as saying Tuesday on Hizbulah's Al Manar-TV that his fighters would begin firing rockets deeper into Israel, south of Haifa. The radio quoted a senior GOI source as saying that Nasrallah is lying and making up "Arabian Nights-type" stories, and that Israel should not relate to them. Vice PM Shimon Peres was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Radio that Israel should not relate to Nasrallah's remarks, but that it should be prepared as if Nasrallah had been telling the truth. Major media cited statements by senior Hizbulah members, including Nasrallah, that the organization did not foresee Israel's strong response following the abduction of two IDF soldiers along the Lebanese border. Yediot bannered a "secret" message that Nasrallah reportedly transmitted to his men, according which Israel's home front would break in two weeks. Ha'aretz had reported in today's edition that an IDF analysis of the messages transmitted by Nasrallah to his men during the fighting in Lebanon revealed a slightly less bellicose tone than the one he took in media interviews during the same period.

The media reported that the battle for Bint Jbail is continuing. Israel Radio reported that ten IDF troops were wounded in the southern Lebanese town today. The media reported that a senior Hizbulah commander was killed in a clash with the IDF, although Maariv wrote that the report was unconfirmed. Leading media mentioned the IDF's belief that Hizbulah is retreating. Maariv bannered an Israeli intelligence assessment that Nasrallah is hiding in the Iranian Embassy in Beirut and conducting the fighting against Israel from there. Yediot quoted a senior Israeli military source as saying that during the past two nights the IDF attacked convoys of weapons that were on their way from Syria to Lebanon. Maariv reported that the IAF has received orders to respond massively for each Katyusha rocket fired into Israel. All major media quoted IDF Intelligence head Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin as saying before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Tuesday that Damascus fears that Israel would expand its Lebanon offensive to include Syria and that it has gone on high alert in preparation for such a scenario. Maariv stressed Yadlin's remark that Israel is not interested in a conflict with Syria. Yadlin also warned that Hizbulah was planning to abduct more IDF soldiers, in addition to the two it has already kidnapped, in an effort to use them as bargaining chips in a future exchange of captives for prisoners.

All media reported that a 15-year-old girl from the Israeli Arab village of Maghar in the Galilee was killed Tuesday when a Hizbulah-fired rocket landed in her living room. The rocket was one of 95 to land in the north on Tuesday, including 17 that hit Haifa, where The Jerusalem Post said a man died of a heart attack while running for shelter.

Globes cited an assessment by Israeli economists that should the war in Lebanon continue for two more weeks, the cost of the confrontation to Israel would amount to 10 to 20 billion shekels (around USD 2.26-4.52 billion). Globes reported that a budget deficit of 7 to 9 billion shekels (around USD 1.58-2 billion) is being forecast. The Jerusalem Post reported on important donations to Israel by Jewish American communities.

Maariv reported that the US Embassy in Tel Aviv has announced that it would be considerate of tourist visa applicants who are prevented from coming to the Embassy because of Hizbulah's rocket attacks or call-ups to the IDF.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli diplomatic officials as saying

that Israel would not discuss a withdrawal from the Sheba Farms area.

Reporting from the Rome conference on the Israel-Lebanon crisis, two Yediot correspondents wrote that two "senior Arab statesmen" have expressed strong criticism of Israel's "too slow" operation against Hizbulah.

Ha'aretz quoted AG Menachem Mazuz as saying Tuesday that Israel is still not legally at war with Lebanon, even though it is conducting large-scale ground operations on Lebanese territory.

Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas presented to Secretary Rice his plan for the release of captured IDF soldier Cpl. Gilad Shalit: Shalit would be released in exchange for the freeing of Palestinian prisoners, the cessation of Israel's attacks, and the lifting of the economic siege on the PA. The radio quoted Abbas as saying that his plan enjoys the approval of all Palestinian groups, including Hamas. Yediot published the details of Hamas's demands. The Jerusalem Post headlined: "Abbas Promises to Help Release Gilad Shalit." Ha'aretz quoted Muhammad Nazal, a senior "Hamas-abroad" official, as saying Tuesday that Hamas and Hizbulah must cooperate on the matter of the abducted soldiers.

Maariv cited an allegation by Turkey that on Tuesday the Israel Navy shot at a Turkish ferry carrying Lebanese fleeing their country. Maariv cited the IDF's response by that the vessel suspiciously left Beirut port without identifying itself.

Leading media cited the preliminary findings of an air force investigation into Monday's helicopter crash that killed two IDF officers: It is likely to have been caused by a hit from an IDF rocket.

Yediot reported that foreign buyers are less eager to purchase Israeli defense products in the wake of Hizbulah's missile hit on an Israel Navy ship.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported on the largest ever cash sale of an Israeli company: Hewlett-Packard is buying the Israeli company Mercury Interactive Corp. for USD 4.5 billion. The media noted that the US Securities and Exchanges Commission is currently investigating Mercury for financial irregularities.

Mideast:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Why should Lebanon take on this politically and militarily difficult task [of disarming Hizbulah] if it feels it has US support regardless?"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv: "Condoleezza Rice ... is no longer convinced of anything. On the one hand, she is giving [Israel] some rope. On the other hand she would like to see us doing something with that rope -- hanging Nasrallah, for example."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "At the conclusion of two weeks of fighting, Israel is far from a decisive victory, and its main objectives have not been achieved."

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Israel [could] help convince that this is not just Israel's war but that of the entire Western world against ... Iran, Syria, Hamas, and Hizbulah."

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of Ha'aretz: "The decision to launch a broad military operation in Lebanon ... was made with lightning speed."

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The primary decision-makers do not [seem to] have a hidden agenda in this war."

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "It would be worthwhile to remember that the US has very close links with Britain.... There also is the issue of oil and its price."

Very liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti wrote in Ha'aretz: "Experience teaches us that the turnaround from patriotic criticism to rational behavior based on moral norms occurs sooner or later."

Prominent liberal novelist David Grossman wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "Whereas Hizbulah is interested in the destruction of Israel, most Palestinians have already become reconciled -- albeit grudgingly -- with its existence."

Block Quotes:

II. "No Prizes For Hizbulah"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (7/26): "'The people of this region, Israeli, Lebanese and Palestinian have lived too long in fear and in terror and in violence,' Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, standing next to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Tuesday. 'A durable solution will be one that strengthens the forces of peace and democracy in the region.' Rice is right. Such a durable solution must begin with the principle that Hizbulah is handed only defeats and Israel only victories by this war's diplomatic aftermath. Otherwise, aggression will have been rewarded and the seeds of future conflict will have been sown. In this context, Lebanon's demand that Israel relinquish the Sheba Farms enclave, and the murmur of international support such demands are gaining, are mystifying and disturbing.... A critical component of the 'durable solution' the US is correctly seeking is for Lebanon to do something that it has failed, despite substantial international pressure, to do until now: disarm Hizbulah and prevent its rearming. Why should Lebanon take on this politically and militarily difficult task if it feels it has US support regardless?"

II. "The Rope Offered by Condoleezza Rice"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv (7/26): "[At the Lebanon Forum, which is meeting in Rome today] the Europeans will be torn between these two poles, but will tend to support Annan. In the end, there may be a formula calling for an immediate temporary cease-fire for humanitarian purposes. Or perhaps the American position will prevail, perhaps with British support. But this is not certain, because, unfortunately, the Americans do not have the power of veto at the Lebanon Forum. When in Rome, do as the Lebanese do. Condoleezza Rice herself is no longer convinced of anything. On the one hand, she is giving [Israel] some rope. On the other hand she would like to see us doing something with that rope -- hanging Nasrallah, for example. 'What is your end game?' she has been asking the Israelis. 'What do you see as your way out of this situation in the end?' And indeed, a good question. We are no longer seeking the 'decisive point,' but rather the 'feel good point.'"

III. "No Goals Attained"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (7/26): "At the conclusion of two weeks of fighting, Israel is far from a decisive victory, and its main objectives have not been achieved. There are major lessons to be learned. The war of attrition being waged by Hizbulah is continuing unabated.... Without the assistance of ground forces, it will not be possible to hit the rocket reservoirs hidden in tunnels and basements. Excellent troops have been sent in from the standing army but if hundreds of Hizbulah fighters are not hit, the achievement will be only partial.... The objective of keeping Syria out of the conflict has been achieved -- so far. Syrian troops are on alert, and the Syrians are helping to bring equipment to Hizbulah. Israel is preparing for the eventuality that Syria's leaders will make a mistake. The Palestinians in Gaza are meanwhile suffering the IDF's wrath at Hizbulah, and the

responses to Qassam attacks have become harsher. There is no progress yet in the diplomatic attempts to bring about a new type of cease-fire. Israel has to be wary, lest Hizbulah surprise it and cause heavy losses."

IV. "V For Victory"

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist *Yediot Aharonot* (7/26): "What ... would be considered an achievement for the IDF, the government, and the state? [Such a possibility would exist] if, in the context of an arrangement, Hizbulah and its Katyusha rockets remain in the Beirut area, do not get close to South Lebanon, and especially do not open fire. In such a case, a threat would still hover above Israel -- and even possibly increase -- but in the context such an agreement it would not be very different from treaties with Arab states that possess emergency weapons arsenals. The other option -- probably the less advisable one -- would be to intensify the conflict with Hizbulah and to draw into it mostly American foreign forces that Israel will help convince that this is not just Israel's war but that of the entire Western world against the malefic quartet, as Shimon Peres called it Tuesday -- Iran, Syria, Hamas, and Hizbulah."

IV. "Was There a Proper Decision Process?"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of *Ha'aretz* (7/26): "The decision to launch a broad military operation in Lebanon, in response to the abduction of soldiers ... on the morning of July 12, was made with lightning speed.... [At first] the 'world' blamed Hizbulah and agreed to put off a cease-fire until a broader agreement is reached on southern Lebanon. World media this week turned against Israel and focused on Lebanon's destruction, but sources in Jerusalem say this is not reflected so far in the important positions of the government.... Olmert will [also] have to redraw his [realignment] plan, knowing that the international recognition he wants for the new border in the West Bank will require him to evacuate the IDF, not just settlers, thereby taking a security risk."

VII. "No Hidden Agenda"

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in independent, left-leaning *Ha'aretz* (7/26): "The Lebanon War of 1982 was founded upon a ruse: the defense minister and the chief of staff had a covert plan that they concealed from the government. In the Lebanon War of 2006, all the cards are on the table. But in this instance, as well, there is a lurking danger of the political leadership being dragged into events by authorizing the plans proposed by the military leadership.... In the current war, no significant cracks have been spotted, so far, in the version reported by the political leadership and the senior military leadership in their description of the war and its objectives. This would mean the primary decision-makers do not have a hidden agenda in this war. Nevertheless, two weeks into the war, it is coming across as a runaway train over which the government's control is growing increasingly tenuous."

VII. "The Turnabout Will Come Quickly"

Very liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti wrote in *Ha'aretz* (7/26): "No one can predict this, but experience teaches us that the turnabout from patriotic criticism to rational behavior based on moral norms occurs sooner or later, sometimes within weeks or months and sometimes after a generation. It seems that in the current outbreak of violence, the change will come very quickly; its conduct, objectives and results do not encourage too much enthusiasm and it has not even been granted the title of 'war' since those who waged it are not sure if they want to commemorate it among the state's official wars or if they believe it would perhaps be better to forget it."

VIII. "The US, Oil Interests, and Britain"

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in nationalist, Orthodox *Hatzofe* (7/26): "President Bush undoubtedly has been one of the friendliest US presidents to Israel.... But ... it would be worthwhile to

remember that the US has very close links with Britain and that relations between Tony Blair and George Bush are particularly good. There also is the issue of oil and its price.... An international force would not have the capacity to prevent Hizbulah from rebuilding itself."

IX. "On the Wrong Track"

Prominent liberal novelist David Grossman wrote in Yediot Aharonot (7/26): "The uncompromising bellicose activity of Hizbulah has caused many Israelis to lump the two fronts together and to have a feeling that they pose a single existential threat. But whereas Hizbulah is interested in the destruction of Israel, most Palestinians have already become reconciled -- albeit grudgingly -- with its existence and the necessity of dividing the land between the two nations. Most of the Israelis and Palestinians recognize that they are destined to live together and cannot be separated. Both have a clear interest in reaching a compromise and even to give up some of their demands which are a matter of principle for them. It is clear to both of them that in the last analysis, the conflict cannot be solved by force. The cruel pounding of the Gaza Strip has achieved all that it can, and according to reports even the most extremist organizations in the Palestinian Authority are ready for a cease-fire. A sincere Israeli proposal to begin negotiations even before the end of the fighting with Hizbulah could send a signal to the Palestinians and the entire world that Israel draws a distinction between these two conflicts, and will improve the situation of Israel on both fronts at one and the same time."

JONES